

First Presbyterian ("Old Stone")
Church in Cleveland
91 Public Square, northwest corner
Rockwell Ave. and Ontario St.
Cleveland
Cuyahoga County
Ohio

HABS No. 0-2124
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN ("OLD STONE") CHURCH IN CLEVELAND, OHIO

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Location: 91 Public Square, northwest corner Rockwell Ave.
and Ontario St., Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

Present Owner: The First Presbyterian Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

Present Occupant: The First Presbyterian Society in Cleveland, which
was established 1820, when the population of
Cleveland was about 150.

Present Use: Church sanctuary.

Statement of
Significance: Preceded only a few months by Trinity Church
(Episcopal), "The Old Stone Church" is Cleveland's
second oldest. Established under the "Plan of
Union" of the Presbyterian and Congregational
Churches, it is the Mother Church in Cleveland of
the many Presbyterian and Congregational Churches
which followed. It is the oldest surviving building
in the central city.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: About 1830 the site was purchased for \$400.00 with the gifts of ten early settlers. There is no record of any use of this site (for building purposes) prior to 1832, when the first church building (55' x 80') was erected. This original gray sandstone structure had Tuscan pilasters. It was the first stone building used exclusively as a church in Cleveland. Eventually it was known as "The Stone Church," and later "The Old Stone Church" as the sandstone darkened. The popular appellation was later transferred to the new sanctuary, which was erected on the same site in 1854.
2. Date of erection: In 1853 The First Presbyterian Society authorized Heard & Porter, Architects, to design and supervise construction of a new building, and contracted with Eason and Warner for its erection. (C. W. Heard, a son-in-law of Painesville architect Jonathan Goldsmith, was later to design many of Cleveland's buildings and homes, while W. J. Warner became known as Cleveland's outstanding master mason.) The building was dedicated August 12, 1855. In March 1857, a serious fire destroyed much of the interior construction, the galleries, and the

steeple, but the well-constructed brick lining of the stone foundation and exterior walls withstood the heat and flames so that they could be used for reconstruction. Amasa Stone headed a group which urged prompt rebuilding. He helped supervise the work so that the reconstructed sanctuary was dedicated January 17, 1858. The spire was rebuilt in 1865. 10.

3. Original plans: Not available.
4. Alterations and additions: In January, 1884, a second fire took place but did not affect the foundation and walls. The spire was not destroyed by the fire, but nevertheless was removed about this time because it had been weakened by heavy rain and because a turret had fallen. Since most of the members no longer lived in the central city, there was a strong movement against rebuilding; this was resisted by Col. John Hay (son-in-law of Amasa Stone) and Judge Samuel Williamson. The result was the rebuilding on the same walls and foundations. This was under direction of Architect Charles Schweinfurth, who was responsible for the present open-beam construction of the ceiling. The reconstructed sanctuary in present form was dedicated October 19, 1884. The steeple on the east tower (weakened by the fire) was removed later. This east tower was rebuilt about 1900.
5. Some historical events taking place in the structure and its predecessor:
 - a. 1843: Cleveland's first medical school organized in the church parlors by Dr. John Delamater, and first classes were held there.
 - b. 1844: The Western Convention of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers met at The Old Stone Church. Eleven states sent 300 representatives. They appealed for church unity and condemned slavery.
 - c. 1861: Sermon by Dr. Goodrich, "The Christian Necessity of War," received national publicity.
 - d. 1865: Memorial services were held for Abraham Lincoln within the church at the same time that his body lay in state on a catafalque erected in front of the church in the Public Square.
 - e. 1866: "Home for Friendless" organized to care for refugees from the south. Eventually became Lakeside Hospital (now a unit of the University Hospitals of Cleveland).

- f. 1869: Presbyterian Union organized with the purpose of financial aid to new churches.
- g. 1879: Moody and Sankey Revivals.
- h. 1882: Removal of Western Reserve University from Hudson to Cleveland sponsored by Dr. Haydn (Pastor of the Old Stone Church and Trustee of Western Reserve University) and which was financed by Amasa Stone.
- i. 1887-90: Dr. Haydn assumed presidency of Western Reserve University in addition to his duties at The Old Stone Church.
- j. 1893: Mrs. Samuel Mather encouraged the formation of a vacation school in the chapel and paid its cost in order to demonstrate the need of "summer schools" within the Cleveland School System. The experiment was so successful that it was soon moved to the nearby Rockwell School Building. Later summer schools were incorporated as a city-wide project of the Cleveland Board of Education.
- k. 1898: Thanksgiving Service for "Glorious American Victories" in war with Spain.
- l. 1963: Monday, November 25th, 3,500 (largest congregation ever) attended Memorial Service following assassination of President John F. Kennedy.
- m. Presently the sanctuary is used for a combined activity of the Cleveland Church Federation for Daily Noonday Service during the Lenten Season.
6. Important old views: A photocopy of a watercolor painting in the collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society (accession #44.434), Cleveland, is included in this report. It was painted in September 1856 by Catherine C. Hopley. Other old views are also in their collection.
7. Bibliography:

Annals of The First Presbyterian Church of Cleveland
(1820-1895). Cleveland: Winn & Judson, 1895.

Chapman, Edmund H. Cleveland - Village to Metropolis.
Cleveland: The Western Reserve Historical Society
and Western Reserve University Press, 1964.

Ludlow, Arthur C., D.D. The Old Stone Church - The Story of One Hundred Years. Cleveland: The Premier Press, 1920.

Minutes of The First Presbyterian Society of Cleveland and of its Trustees. Handwritten - in the possession of the church.

Rose, William Ganson. Cleveland - The Making of a City. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1950.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Romanesque Revival; massive walls of local sandstone ashlar.
2. Condition of fabric: Good, well-maintained. Sandstone black with age. Not known to have been cleaned since construction.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Sanctuary (subject of this study) 88' x 117'. Parish House to the north, replacing 1892 structure, is of modern design, ell-shaped, 108' x 208', and constructed in 1960. It houses church offices, chapel, classrooms, etc., and the headquarters of the Cleveland Presbytery.
2. Foundations: Built 1854. Sandstone lined with brick.
3. Exterior wall construction: Sandstone lined with brick.
4. Chimneys: None.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Entrances have Romanesque arches. Doors are of oak with massive steel strap hinges and hardware.
 - b. Windows: Leaded glass. The Art Glass windows are outstanding:
 - "St. Catherine of Alexandria" (1885) by John LaFarge
 - "Beside the Still Waters" (1915) by Louis C. Tiffany
 - "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (1930) by Louis C. Tiffany

"Christ Blessing Little Children" (1920) by
F. and S. Lamb

"The Recording Angel" (1885) by Louis C. Tiffany

"The Sower" (1930) by Louis C. Tiffany.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape: Low gable.
- b. Covering: Initially slate; now composition.
- c. Framing: Two wooden trusses running north and south. Wood sheathing attached to wooden rafters running east and west.
- d. Cornice: None. Parapet walls with stone capping.
- e. Dormers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Large unbroken auditorium. South area divided only by narthex, vestibule, and small robing room.
2. Stairways: To balcony only, in the sanctuary. Two flights (one on east, one on west) each double runs.
3. Flooring: Wood; carpeted.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered walls - painted - frescoed. Ceiling oak - false open beam supporting structure.
5. Doorways and doors: Oak panelled (from narthex into sanctuary).
6. Woodwork: Oak, lightly stained, varnished.
7. Pews: Fixed pine pews grained to simulate oak.
8. Lighting: Electric - leaded glass pendant from ceiling.
9. Heating: Steam.
10. Organ: Four-manual console. Original organ by W. B. Johnson, 1895; case remains. Organ replaced 1925 by E. M. Skinner. Reconstructed 1955 by M. P. Moller, Inc.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The entrance to the sanctuary is on the south facade of the structure which faces Public Square. The building occupies the northwest corner of Rockwell Avenue and Ontario Street. The east side of the building follows along the west side of Ontario Street. All other buildings in the area are more recent, although the monumental Society for Savings (now Society National Bank) building on the opposite corner was built in 1890. It is on one of the busiest corners in the City of Cleveland, and is at what is generally accepted as the City's center.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: Attached parish house to north (built 196?); three stories and basement; sandstone.
4. Walks: Cement. Steps: Granite.
5. Landscaping: Very simple. Narrow strip landscaped with shrubbery along Ontario Street.

Prepared by Albert C. May, Trustee
First Presbyterian Society in
Cleveland, Ohio
1020 Homewood Drive
Lakewood, Ohio 44107
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as a co-operative project between the Western Reserve Historical Society and the Historic American Buildings Survey following a recommendation in 1964 by Mr. Robert C. Gaede, then the National Chairman of the American Institute of Architects' Committee for the Preservation of Historic Buildings. In February 1965, a final list of fourteen structures to be recorded was agreed upon by the Western Reserve Historical Society, Mr. Meredith B. Colket, Director; and the HABS, acting upon the recommendations of John C. Poppeliers, Editor. The Cleveland Chapter AIA assisted in the evaluation of these structures. A documentary research program which included both historical and architectural writeups was coordinated by Mr. Jack Large, Assistant to the Director of the Western Reserve Historical Society. It was undertaken by members of the Society and local architects. Mr. Martin Linsey of Shaker Heights, Ohio, supplied the photographs.